A Bittersweet Feast

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Summary

Kinktober Day 28: Vore.

It would be bittersweet, he reminded himself, but if he mourned Will, it would be with fondness, not regret.

Notes

Watch the tags carefully, MCD and all that. It’s not maximum level brutality, because Will at least has some pain management and Hannibal could have drawn out his death longer, but he is more or less conscious throughout and Hannibal doesn't give him enough to cover all of the pain. And Will suggested the cannibalism but he definitely did not expect to be alive when it happened.

I did my best to be realistic here, but I doubt it's textbook accurate.

See the end of the work for more notes

“Maybe we’d both be better off if you just ate me.”

Will might not have had a clear idea of what he was signing up for when he said that, in all his reckless distress when he realized that even knowing who Hannibal was, he couldn’t quite bring himself to pull the trigger, let alone murder him as intimately as he’d dreamed of. He had stepped on the verge of his becoming, and when Hannibal had tried to push him forward he’d just fallen back. In another life Hannibal was sure he would have continued to push until he saw the threads of Will’s self-restraint unravel. But in this world, the temptation of Will’s sacrifice was too great to deny.

“That could be arranged,” he had replied.

And after a long moment, tipping his head against the back of his chair and staring at the ceiling, Will had nodded.

Hannibal hadn’t given Will much chance to change his mind. He would rather remember that naïve acquiescence than any fuss about the details. If he was to receive such a gift, he wanted it to be precisely as he imagined it—even though Will might have changed his mind had Hannibal offered forth details.

He brought Will to his guest room, insisting it was for his comfort. Will was tense as he gathered his supplies, clearly unsure what to expect but not daring to ask. Hannibal carefully selected a blend of opioids and gave him a sizable injection that soon turned him woozy, then practically limp. Hannibal checked his constricted pupils and lay a hand on his forehead. He was hot to the touch for the moment, but the drugs and blood loss would eventually turn him pale and cold; considering the circumstances, Hannibal tried to appreciate his warmth while it lasted.

His fingers neatly unbuttoned Will’s shirt, revealing an increasingly deep V of skin until the final button was undone.

“What’re you doin’ to me now?” Will mumbled, sounding curious but not bothered. Hannibal ignored him for the moment, blocking out the noise of his speech in favor of other sensory details. He pulled the shirt off his shoulders, though Will was no help—he fell backwards as soon as there was slack and grinned unevenly when the mattress bounced, the euphoric effects of the drugs clearly set in.

Hannibal abandoned the shirt now stuck around his elbows and saw to his pants instead. His khakis and briefs came off all at once, sliding down over his knees and ankles and dropping to the floor, and Hannibal leaned in and inhaled through his mouth, tasting the air rather than smelling.

Will.

His hands went to Will’s thighs and ran up them, catching coarse dark hairs in the webbing of his fingers. He contemplated whether shaving would be advisable, but he didn't want to leave any residue on his skin. He had considered sponging him down, as well, for hygienic reasons—usually he would skin and cook his meat, but this would be an unusual meal for him, and Will would be eaten raw.

He couldn’t resist, once his hands reached Will's hips, curling his fingers around them and rubbing his thumbs where he could feel bone protrude slightly. Will let out a soft sigh, but made no further comment.

The advantage of opioids was that they were analgesic, not anesthetic, meaning Will would experience considerably less pain, but not complete numbness. Hannibal would admit he had perhaps calculated his dose on the low side, because he wanted Will conscious, and he wanted him to *feel*. Not thrashing and screaming in pain, no, but did he not owe Will the awareness of how he was dying? Did he not deserve to feel his body come apart under Hannibal’s blade and teeth? So there would be some pain, just not enough to put him into shock—the blood loss would do well enough on its own.

He stretched over Will’s body as if he were prowling over his prey, which technically wasn't inaccurate. He hadn’t intended to do anything more than undress Will and arrange him on the bone-white sheets of the bed, but he didn’t want to waste this moment. He felt each slight curve of his stomach, his torso. He pressed hard enough to know there was muscle underlying the surface, though it was now entirely lax. He wished he could have seen him nude in motion so he could watch the flex of his muscles, but he wasn’t about to waste time on wistfulness. He would gorge himself on Will now and save the rest to sate his appetites in the coming weeks.

He leaned down until his nose was against Will’s sternum, and he inhaled. Yes, he was glad he hadn’t tried to wash him ahead of time. There was much delight to be found in this—his skin, a trace of nervous sweat, even the trace of flannel and his usual detergent. Perhaps they were not gourmet in the usual sense, but they spoke of everything that reminded him of Will. They comforted him.

He exhaled. Perhaps that train of thought was a warning that he had formed the kind of attachment that made this path less than ideal, but he would not heed it. The bittersweet sensation that he was experiencing now was a rarity for him, something he usually only felt when he was vividly reminded of his childhood home, or when he heard certain strains of mournful strings. And like his childhood, there was much to love and much to fear about Will. He thought perhaps what he loved and what he feared in this case were uncomfortably closely twined, almost impossible to pry apart. It made Will precious, and it made him dangerous. Rather than a warning sign, then, he might better view that tug on his heart as a reminder of why it was wise to end this now.

Will’s face was turned away from him, fallen to the side. He cupped Will’s cheek and brought him back front and center so he could see. His eyes were nearly closed, though fluttering slightly. Hannibal dug his fingers in harshly—he needed him to *see*—and Will’s eyes blinked closed a few times before opening more widely.

His pupils were tiny pinpricks in a sea of blue and grey and green, and the smallest flecks of copper graced them like gold accented the *Primavera*. It must be awfully dark for him right now with so little light entering his vision. He wondered if Will would see him as nothing more than a shadow hanging over him.

“Can you see me, Will?”

Will mumbled something that sounded more like “yeah” than “no.”

Hannibal sighed. He sat with one knee on each side of Will’s chest and let his hands wander over Will’s clavicle and the ridges of his trachea, over the roughness of his cheeks. He brushed his still-pink lips and wondered how much of him he could consume before their rosy hue faded to the pale, greyed tones of death.

He tasted them. Licked right over their seam, dragged his tongue over Will’s lower lip and down into the cleft of his chin until his top teeth caught upon his lip. Softly. Not biting down, just testing.

He pulled back and watched Will, who watched him back passively, with long, drowsy blinks of his eyes. In no state to protest anything.

He pushed a forefinger against Will’s lips now, pulled and dragged—stretching their form, pulling them away from teeth. A furrow appeared in Will’s brow. Good. He was perhaps somewhat self-aware.

His finger entered Will’s mouth, feeling the slick inner surface of his lips, tracing the tips of his lower teeth with enough pressure to feel where they were worn smooth as marble and where their edges remained sharp. He moved past them and onto Will’s tongue—still hot and moist, responsive enough to shift as he touched it, to push back tentatively against the intrusion in his mouth. He could reach back further still and feel the uncertain contraction of his throat. He had already seen what Will looked like when he was gagging desperately, what it felt like to push a tube past his tongue and all the way down his esophagus, past the resistance of his clenching throat. He didn’t need to see that again today. But it was a curious flutter—a reminder of more that would be lost to death.

There was much to be said for fleeting beauty, he thought. Surely his appreciation for Will would be all the greater once he was gone, once all these bodily processes had flickered and died.

He removed his fingers and wiped them on Will’s cheek. Then he rolled him over and pulled his shirt all the way off his arms. Back over, watching the way Will’s head lolled. He righted it, and pressed their lips together. Briefly—not overindulging.

He left him unrestrained. In his current condition, Will was unlikely to put up much of a fight. Even if he did revive himself and begin to writhe beneath Hannibal, seeking to escape, Hannibal was enthralled by the thought of holding him down until loss of blood made his heart quiver like a bird, the final desperate beats as it sought to feed his veins with a substance in too short a supply. He wanted to feel that tremor right against his own skin.

He let Will lie there as he fetched a scalpel, then knelt above him for a long moment, tracing the intended line of incision with his finger. He watched the gentle rise and fall of Will's chest, and rested his palm over his still-beating heart.

It would be bittersweet, he reminded himself, but if he mourned Will, it would be with fondness, not regret.

He drew the scalpel down his center, from his sternum to his navel, splitting through the dermis with no further hesitation. Blood welled quickly. He had made this same incision many times on lesser beings, ready to pry them open to harvest the only parts of them that were of worth, but it was still a striking sight on Will's skin. So vivid a crimson, so eager to spill from him. And the smell… pungent, beautiful. Enough for him to salivate. He smeared it with his bare hand, spreading it thin into sanguine stains, feeling how hot and wet it was. Between the sharpness of the blade and the dulling effect of the drugs, Will had little response besides blinking and twitching.

He bent down and took his first taste, tongue finding the split in the skin and delving into it, feeling the satisfaction of parting skin that didn't wish to be parted, hugging tight around his tongue tip. The taste was strong and full, swamping his other senses. There was a slight bitterness to it that had not been evident in the odor, which he knew was the influence of the opioids. Unfortunate, but unavoidable if he was to enjoy him in this manner. If not the bitterness of drugs, it would be the acrid tang of fear and pain.

He followed the incision to the top and kept going, laving his skin and unable to resist licking up his neck, teasing himself with the pulse of his carotid artery. He scooped blood onto his fingers and pressed them into Will's mouth, and Will weakly licked at them.

Blood was oozing from the incision, and he yearned to dig in and tear him open, reveal the heated organs at his center that brimmed with flavor, indulgences dense in iron and copper. Treasures buried in Will his entire life, guarded by layers of flesh and the bony arc of his ribs —now pried out of him so they would finally see air, then torn, swallowed, and sent to fuel the predator who killed him.

But he was distracted, as his eyes followed the blood further down Will's abdomen, by the pale expanse of his thighs. He squeezed them and felt the ratio of fat to muscle. Will was a lean creature, and he might make a fine osso bucco, but he would also be delicious just like this, raw and radiant.

He could save one thigh for later—no need to be gluttonous.

A scalpel would be the best way to preserve their beauty as long as possible. He could flay the skin in a clean arc and slice out the choice cuts. The meat beneath his pale flesh would be red and raw in contrast; artful, clean. But intimate though the blade would be, it was still a tool. This deserved something more.

He looked up at Will, whose eyes had fluttered closed again. He let his gaze wander over his body as he lowered his face to his thigh. Inhaled, the air a tad muskier at this distance. Eyed where his hair thickened and his flaccid member lay. Mouthed at the soft skin of his inner thigh, conscious of his distance from the femoral artery, which would bring this to too quick

of an end. Mindful of the fact that his teeth would have to tear, that severing the flesh so raggedly would be more painful than the clean cut of a blade, that the painkillers he had given might not quite be sufficient, and finding he didn't truly care.

He found the tender place where his teeth wanted to settle, and he bit down.

Will made a confused noise as his jaw was bearing down, and weakly tried to shift his leg. Hannibal clenched his jaw harder, and he tasted iron leaking from the chunk of thigh he had bitten. He growled, and shifted his mandible, and ripped.

He could hear Will groaning as his teeth tore through skin and filled his mouth with a burst of blood. His skin itself was tough, chewy; the flesh beneath it was rendered unctuous by subcutaneous fat, lending a certain decadence which he would rarely indulge in other contexts, yet was fitting now. His flesh was hot and slippery, surprisingly supple and almost sweet without the flavor usually imparted to meat by searing it.

He chewed, his eyes closing for a minute to savor while his hand rested on the outside of Will's thigh, holding it steady. Opening his eyes, he saw how quickly the blood filled the wound and blossomed across the sheets. He shifted himself forward, kissing above Will's navel where the skin had split, then in the dip of his clavicle, then on his gasping lips. He licked into his mouth and shared the taste of his raw flesh. He could not feed it to him properly with his usual artistic presentation, and he regretted that somewhat. In another world, perhaps, they could feast on his body together, one limb at a time—but this was the path he had chosen.

He slipped his bare fingers into the slit he had made, splitting open Will's abdomen, making him grunt in confusion, brows drawing together. He pushed in, feeling his way through his abdominal cavity, wrapping fingers around the organs he encountered—the sensation was similar to his memories of surgeries and murders, but this was far more intimate than either. No nitrile gloves between him and the flesh. Each organ felt different under the pads of his fingers, and the immense heat of the bowels felt more intense than ever. And the smell escaped with the heat—somewhat unpleasant, this murky metallic scent of his guts, but it was by now far too familiar to ruin his appetite.

Before he went further, he paused to smooth Will's hair back from his forehead and lay a hand on it, as he had in the past when Will was suffering from encephalitis. Then it had been blistering hot to the touch; now it was shining with sweat, but clammy. The heat of life already beginning to drain from him.

He moved his hand to Will's cheek, where his skin was losing his flush, but where the roughness of his stubble was still prominent, adding shadows to his face. And from habit, held his hand just in front of Will's mouth and nose so he could feel the flow of breath, which had become shallow enough that it was difficult to detect in the movement of his chest.

It struck him how impatient he was to get to the heart of him, in a quite literal sense. Hannibal moved him slightly, lifting his hips onto a pillow so he was reclined and the organs under his ribs more accessible.

"You are sublime, Will," he murmured.

Will made a vague noise in response, but he was clearly fading. Blood loss in addition to the heaviness of the sedative rendered him truly limp, with no attempt to adjust himself when he was rearranged.

It was best to take the true prize while it remained beating.

Hannibal reached in again, this time under the ribcage—a tight fit, surrounded by burning flesh, bracketed by ribs that rose and fell in shallow motions, tightening around him.

He could get a bone saw, go directly through the ribs, but it would have been loud, impersonal. More of a butchery than a ritual. Like this, though, the angle was difficult, and in seeking to gain a hold on the heart he pushed against the lungs—an action that made air hiss from them and provoked a short fit of shallow coughs. But then he had it. His fingers could run over its thickly veined surface and feel it thrumming, slow and growing slower with time.

He wrapped his hand around it and squeezed gently—it throbbed at double speed for a moment, a panicked flutter, and Will twitched. He held Will's life in his hand, in the most literal sense. Blood loss would kill him eventually, but this is what would stop his life almost immediately, rob his veins of blood and his brain of oxygen, sap the warmth from him.

He had to spend a moment appreciating the gravity of its pulse in his palm, Will's dulled groans of pain, and the contrast of Hannibal's heart beating within his own ribs—faster, steady in the absence of wounds, and secure in its cage. The same thrumming as Will's, at its most basic level, the same structure of muscle and tissue—but this is where their beating would diverge.

He was nearly up to his elbow in blood. He used the arm that was now implanted in Will's chest to spread his abdominal cavity wider, making it easier for his other hand to enter with a scalpel carefully held in his fingers.

By touch and memory he found and sliced through the aorta in quick strokes, freeing the heart from its tether. Will's body convulsed, and Hannibal pulled the heart back quickly from beneath his ribs. It still had some reflexive pulses left in it, and blood leaked and spurted from it. Even disconnected from Will's body, it was hot and beating as if it was still a living part of him, still carrying some trace of his essence or soul.

He lifted Will's heart to his mouth and licked over its surface, tongue more sensitive to each pulse of residual energy than his fingers. Then, before the moment was lost, he sank his teeth into it.

The heart was tough, sinewy. It resisted, in its final hours, the grind of Hannibal's teeth, though they were far from dull. His clenching jaw wrung fresh blood from its ventricles, flooding his mouth and dripping down his chin, until finally he tore a piece free.

He consumed it greedily, eyes fallen closed for a moment in rapture, before returning them to the sight of Will. The macerated meat that slipped down his throat felt more alive than the body that now lay before him—hollowed and bled, pale and still.

Even the tremors of the heart in his hand ceased, and he sighed. He was struck by the sudden feeling of being alone. Will's presence was now less than it had been, leaving only Hannibal's heart beating in the silence. It bore a dull ache, now. In time he would divert his attention to practical matters—Will's flesh could be divided into parcels for many meals, and he could make something with what remained, some display of his bones. But for now he licked the blood from his lips, and took in the sight.

Even in pieces, Will was beautiful enough to haunt him.

End Notes

I totally stole the "quiver like a bird" bit from a script in s3, when Hannibal told Dolarhyde to go after Will and his family - he told him to "think about holding him down until loss of blood makes his heart quiver like a bird." And I thought that was a surprisingly erotic detail that I absolutely had to work into a fic at some point.

Apparently this method of heart removal is plausible. I learned a lot researching this one, including the fact that no matter how strong my stomach is, watching human dissections while eating pizza is not ideal.

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